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### Getting a Taste of Teaching

Windsor officials hope to home-grow their teachers with a cadet program.

BY ALICIA P.Q. WITTMAYER

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WINDSOR -- Ms. Hunt is taking her students through a multiplication problem. They've advanced to double digits, and those can be rough.

She carries a one, then moves on to the next step: multiplying the numbers in the tens place.

But her class of third-graders is looking confused. Some of them start looking around, distracted.

Then the safety net kicks in: "You're moving too quick on it. It's a new concept. You've got stragglers."

Morgan Hunt, 17, takes the hint.

She starts over more slowly, thanks to the tip from her safety net, the teacher, Deborah Haring.

Hunt, an 11th-grader at Windsor High School, is one of eight students - seven of them girls - involved in the first year of the school's teacher cadet program.

Windsor is participating in a statewide program called Teachers for Tomorrow, in which 11th- and 12th-graders interested in becoming teachers can get firsthand experience of what it's like to take charge of a classroom.

Other local schools have already experimented with the program, including Heritage High School in Newport News, and Poquoson High School.

And states across the nation, including North Carolina, have their own versions of the program.

The program is meant to expose students to teaching and to get them thinking about whether they want to become one, said Reuben Johns, who heads career and technical education for Isle of Wight and who helped start the program at Windsor.

Johns said the hope is they'll get hooked on teaching, go off to college and return to finish their careers in the district where they got started.

"We started mainly because we wanted to start growing our own teachers," she said.

"There is such a shortage in that area, and we're just trying to encourage students to go into the field."

Windsor's program started as an experiment, Johns said.

But after one year, they like it so much they're looking at expanding it to the county's other high school, Smithfield High.

The student teachers head over to Windsor Middle School or Windsor Elementary School twice a week to work with their assigned mentor-teachers.

They start out observing and assisting the teachers with their lessons and eventually they present their own lesson plans for an entire class period.

Students can pick the area of teaching they're most interested in pursuing.

Hunt is teaching third grade because she's interested in elementary school education. Another student, who likes zoology, is helping with a seventh-grade life science class.

The one male student in the class is teaching physical education.

These students aren't making copies or fetching coffee, said Charlene Saunders, who heads the program.

The key is putting cadets in front of a classroom of children so they can experience both the positives and the negatives of being a teacher before they decide to pursue it as a career.

Star Smith, a 12th-grader at Windsor, said the program hasn't changed her mind about teaching, but it has made her more aware of what she needs to do to prepare herself.

"When you get in there, it's a little different," Smith said. "You have to take everything and apply it."

Smith says she's planning on attending the teacher's education program at Ferrum College, near Roanoke, and then returning home after her studies to teach in Windsor.

"I like getting in front of the kids, having 20 kids watching," she said, "and knowing that they're listening only to you."

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